

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-03

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5426

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PANAMA 6271

FOR AMBASSADOR BUNKER FROM BELL.

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: U.S.-PANAMA TREATY NEGOTIATIONS: CONVERSATION WITH
TORRIJOS ON UNILATERAL ACTIONS AND THE STATE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS.

I.

THIS IS MESSAGE NO. 8 FROM THE NEGOTIATORS APPLICABLE TO
THE SEPTEMBER 1975 (SECOND STAGE) NEGOTIATING ROUND.

II.

A. I MET WITH TORRIJOS ON CONTADORA AGAIN THE EVENING OF
OCTOBER 12. HE EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE TO HIM PERSONALLY
AND TO PANAMA OF UNILATERAL ACTIONS.

B. I REPEATED THAT THERE WERE IMPORTANT MATTERS ON OUR
SIDE ALSO, AT WHICH POINT HE INTERRUPTED TO STATE THAT
HE HAD "DELIVERED" VIA THE OCTOBER 11 SPEECH AND NOW WON-
DERED WHAT WOULD BE FORTHCOMING FROM US IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

C. I SAID THAT PANAMA AND THE UNITED STATES HAVE ALWAYS
REGARDED THE TREATY NEGOTIATIONS AS A PROCESS OF GIVE AND
TAKE. WE GIVE A LITTLE -- THEY GIVE A LITTLE. WHILE WE
COULD AND DID MAKE MANY SIGNIFICANT GESTURES OVER TIME
TO BE HELPFUL TO PANAMA, WE EXPECTED RECIPROCITY FROM
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PANAMA -- THAT IS, THE COMMENTS IN HIS OCTOBER 11

SPEECH WERE SIMPLY THE FIRST INDICATION OF RECIPROCITY. CONSTANT RECIPROCITY WOULD BE EXPECTED. TORRIJOS SAID HE UNDERSTOOD.

D. WE HAVE RECEIVED WHILE HERE A NUMBER OF OTHER HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS ON THE SUBJECT OF UNILATERAL ACTIONS, SOME OF WHICH I TRANSMITTED IN MY MESSAGE NO. 4 AND SOME OF WHICH HAVE BEEN CONVEYED TO US SUBSEQUENTLY. THERE IS GREAT INTEREST IN THE PACIFIC SIDE DRYDOCKS, ESPECIALLY THE "SMALLER ONE" WHICH PANAMA ASSERTS IS LARGELY UNUSED, AND IN THE USE OF NEW FRANCE FIELD (SEE BELOW).

E. TORRIJOS TOLD ME THAT GABRIEL LEWIS IS CHARGED "TOTALLY AND PERSONALLY" WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY OF WORKING THESE THINGS OUT WITH THE AUTHORITIES OF THE CANAL ZONE.

F. LEWIS HAS ASSURED ME THAT HE BELIEVES THAT THE RECENT LACK OF "INTIMATE" COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE ZONE AUTHORITIES AND HIMSELF IS HIS FAULT, NOT THEIRS. HE INTENDS TO REMEDY THAT FORTHWITH. "I WANT TO BE OMAR'S MAN AND PARFITT'S MAN AND I AM WILLING TO RUN THE RISK OF BEING THE MIDDLE MAN. THIS IS TOO IMPORTANT TO US ALL TO AVOID RUNNING SUCH RISKS." IN THE COURSE OF THIS CONVERSATION, LEWIS RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF GOP USE OF NEW FRANCE FIELD. WE REFERRED HIM TO THE COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND PANAMA ON THE SUBJECT DURING 1973, AND NOTED THAT AT THAT TIME PANAMA HAD NOT SEEN FIT TO RESPOND TO A UNITED STATES OFFER TO PERMIT IT THE USE OF THE FIELD. HE SHOULD REVIEW THAT CORRESPONDENCE AND TAKE THE MATTER UP WITH GOVERNOR PARFITT TO SEE WHETHER SOMETHING COULD BE WORKED OUT. I SAID THAT IT WAS MY PERSONAL ASSUMPTION THAT SOMETHING ALONG THE LINES WE HAD PROPOSED IN 1973 MIGHT BE WORKED OUT. WE WANTED TO WORK OUT PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS WHICH WOULD NOT INVOLVE POLITICALLY SENSITIVE MATTERS SUCH AS TRANSFERS OF JURISDICTION. PANAMA ALSO HAD TO UNDERSTAND THAT WE HAD SEVERE LEGAL, TECHNICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPEDIMENTS TO OVERCOME. WE HOPED WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO OVERCOME THEM, BUT PANAMA'S COOPERATION WAS ESSENTIAL.

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III.

A. TORRIJOS INQUIRED INTO THE STATE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS. I SAID THAT I BELIEVED HE UNDERSTOOD THE "STATE" BETTER THAN I DID, BECAUSE I UNDERSTOOD CARLOS LOPEZ-GUEVARA HAD BRIEFED HIM EXTENSIVELY ON OUR CLARIFICATION OF THE UNITED STATES POSITION. HE SAID THAT WAS TRUE. HE ADDED THAT HE NOW SAW "MORE" THAN HE SAW BEFORE. I ASKED IF THAT

WERE "ENOUGH" TO BEGIN BARGAINING. HE SAID, "YES".

B. TORRIJOS CONCLUDED OUR CONVERSATION BY SAYING THAT HE HAD AN INFERENCE FROM LOPEZ-GUEVARA THAT A TREATY WAS IN FACT "WITHIN REACH". I DUCKED IN PART BUT NOT ALTOGETHER. I SAID THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS THE SENSATION THAT A TREATY IS THERE TO BE HAD IF, REPEAT IF, BOTH SIDES ARE WILLING TO ENGAGE IN A PROCESS OF CLEAN, HARD, HONEST BARGAINING -- WITHOUT INTRODUCING EXTRANEIOUS PRESSURES INTO THE RELATIONSHIP. HE SAID HE ACCEPTED THAT A JUDGMENT IN WHICH HE WOULD LIKE TO SHARE.

C. SUBSEQUENTLY, I HAD A TALK WITH RORY GONZALEZ, TORRIJOS' MOST INTIMATE CONFIDANT. GONZALEZ SAID, "1) THE GENERAL WAS IMPRESSED BY LOPEZ-GUEVARA'S REPORT ON YOUR CLARIFICATION SESSIONS; 2) THE GENERAL HAS INSTRUCTED THAT A "FORTHCOMING" COUNTERPROPOSAL BE PRESENTED; 3) THERE ARE MANY GAMES GOING ON IN THE PANAMANIAN BUREAUCRACY, SO THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE THE WHEN, WHERE, WHY, AND HOW OF PANAMA'S NEXT PRESENTATION; BUT 4) I AM CONVINCED THAT TORRIJOS IS IN A "BARGAINING MOOD".

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PANAMA 6271

IV.

A. COMMENT: I INFERRED FROM THE COURSE OF THIS CONVERSATION WITH TORRIJOS AND IN PARTICULAR FROM HIS REMARKS RESPECTING HIS SPEECH

YESTERDAY, THAT HE IS IN A MOOD TO "REACH OUT"
TOWARD US -- FOR WHATEVER REASON. IT IS CLEAR THAT WE
WILL HAVE TO SUCCUMB TO PANAMANIAN DESIRES ON SOME
QUANTUM OF "UNILATERAL ACTIONS". IT IS EQUALLY CLEAR
THAT ALL THEY ASK OF US WE CAN NEVER DELIVER NOR
WOULD WE WISH TO. SOME OF WHAT THEY ASK FOR WE CAN AND
SHOULD. IT SEEMS ESSENTIAL THAT WE PLAY THE UNILATERAL
ACTIONS GAME CAREFULLY WITH GREAT ATTENTIVENESS TO TIMING.

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